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Outline of
THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT
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OUTLINE OF THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

The struggle of China to emerge from the revolution which in 1911 began successfully by overthrowing the Manchu Dynasty has been hampered by the unpreparedness of the people for the responsibilities of public life, and by the age-long influences of apparently sanctified customs.

For hundreds of years the people of China were discouraged from interesting themselves in the affairs of government and were taught, even with the executioner's sword, that the administration of the country was the exclusive concern of the official class.

The people consequently, through the centuries, gradually ceased to have any interest in government and lapsed, as the rulers desired, into complete disregard of national affairs, confining themselves to seeking the welfare of the family and the clan, and knowing nothing, and caring nothing, about the responsibilities of citizenship, the requirements of patriotism, or the urge of loyalty to the country or its flag.

In forced conditions such as these the habits of the great population of China developed along lines quite contrary to those characterizing the peoples of other countries, with the result that when the political window opened they were, in a sense, blinded by the light that suddenly and unexpectedly poured in upon them. They found themselves without understanding of political or official life, bewildered owing to lack of universal education, and hampered by age-long aloofness and habits that are of little consequence to a small country which may be confined and self-contained within its own boundaries, but which have a tremendously suffocating effect upon a great country flung, willy-nilly, into the wide-sweeping economic and political currents of the world.

The march of events is inexorable and cannot wait for the sluggards to catch up, and therefore it becomes incumbent upon those who know the problem of China to take strong action to break down the demoralizing influence which centuries of suppression of national sentiment and feelings has had.

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A new national consciousness and mass psychology have to be created and developed, and with that intention what is called "The New Life Movement" has been launched.

Peoples of the outer world may not at first be able to understand the necessity for such a movement, but they will do so if they realize that they have grown up with national consciousness fully developed around and about them, whereas the Chinese people have been deliberately forcibly bereft of it, and, therefore, know nothing of those sentiments and impulses that so quickly move the Occidental peoples when matters concerning their country come forward for consideration or action. It is to correct the evil consequences arising from this serious state of affairs that action is now being taken along a psychological and educational line.

I. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

To correct, or to revolutionize, an age-old habit is a difficult thing, but by using the simplest, and therefore, most efficient means it is hoped that, in time, the outlook of the people will be entirely changed and they will be able with spirit and competency to meet the requirements of the new time and new life. The aim of the New Life Movement therefore is the social regeneration of China.

It is to this end that their thoughts are now being directed to the ancient high virtues of the nation for guidance, namely, etiquette, justice, integrity and conscientiousness, expressed in "li," "i," "lien" and "ch'ih." These four virtues were highly respected by the Chinese people in the past, and they are vitally necessary now if the rejuvenation of the nation is to be effected.

China has had a cultural history of some five thousand years with fine standards to guide the daily life of the people, and yet, owing to oppression and disregard, they have disappeared and rudeness and vulgarity have supervened.

China, with a territory of 1,896,500 square miles, possesses abundant natural resources, and the only reason to account for the present degeneration and lack of development is that public virtues have been neglected.

We have a population of over four hundred millions, yet because we have neglected to cultivate our virtues social disorder reigns and most of the people lead a life far below that which they should enjoy.

Therefore, we have to learn that to correct personal and national failings we must fall back upon the influence of the old teachings. Rudeness and vulgar manners can be corrected by cultural and artistic training, and degeneration can be overcome by developing good personal character. It is difficult, however, to succeed merely through the ordinary processes of education and governance. If we are determined to reform we must start with the most fundamental question - we must reform our habits first. This, therefore, is why the New Life Movement is regarded as the key to the salvation of our nation.

II. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

A. What is Life?

Dr. Sun Yat-sen said: "Life of the people comprises the livelihood of the people, the existence of society, the welfare of the nation, and the life of the masses." Although the people's life is thus divided into four phases, yet livelihood is the general manifestation of the other three. Existence depends upon protection; welfare needs development; and life demands propagation. To satisfy all these needs, we have to resort to activities. And life is nothing more than the continuation of activities.

B. What is New Life?

All activities to satisfy the desire for the propagation of life, the protection of human existence, and the development of national welfare, are bound to change with changing conditions. Time does not stand still, and environment changes with time. Therefore, only those who readapt themselves to new conditions, day by day, can live properly. When the life of a people is going through this process of readaptation, it has to remedy its own defects, and get rid of those elements which become useless. Then we call it new life.

C. What is the New Life Movement?

In order to satisfy the requirements of a new life for a people, we have, to a certain extent, to depend upon the government, especially its system of education, its economic policies, and its measures to insure the protection of all. However, whether the policies of a government can be successfully carried out depends greatly upon the customs and habits of the people at the time. When an old order

collapses and a new order is about to rise, the new policies are frequently handicapped, if the new system does not base its foundation on the social customs of the time. It is, therefore, necessary to start a movement first, to teach the people to adapt themselves to new conditions, before any ardent support for the new policies can be expected from the people. "Water always flows over a wet surface; while fire goes wherever it is dry." The function of any social movement is to prepare the wet surface for water and the dry place for fire. This accounts for the fact that every nation, during its period of transition, pays more attention to the change of customs and habits than to the new policies themselves. The success of these social movements virtually means the success of the new policies of the government. This illustrates very well the necessity of our New Life Movement. This movement must start with those well aware of its necessity, and gradually expand to others - from nearer to the more distant, and from its simpler phase to the more complex. If a man can cultivate these new habits himself, it is possible that the members of his family will be influenced; and a family can, by turn, influence the whole community. A social movement goes hand in hand with politics and education. It does not depend upon them, instead, it always goes ahead of them.

III. THE OBJECT OF THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

A. Why is a New Life needed?

The general psychology of our people today can be described in one word, - spiritlessness. What manifests itself in behavior is this: no discrimination between the good and the evil, no difference between what is public and what is private, and no distinction between the fundamental and the expedient. Because there is no discrimination between the good and the evil, consequently right and wrong are confused; because there is no difference between public and private, there lacks proper guidance for taking and giving; and because there is no distinction between the fundamental and the expedient, there is misplacement of the first and the last. As a result, officials tend to be dishonest and avaricious; the masses are undisciplined and calloused; the adults are ignorant and corrupt; the youth become degraded and intemperate; the rich become extravagant and luxurious; and the poor become mean and disorderly. Naturally, it resulted in the complete disorganization of social order and national life. Consequently, we are not in a position either to prevent or to remedy natural calamities or disasters caused from within or invasions from without. The individual, society, and the whole country are now suffering. It would be impossible even to continue living under such miserable conditions. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to get rid of these backward conditions and to start to lead a new and rational life.

B. Why is a New Life Movement needed?

In order to raise the standard of the people's livelihood and to create a new society, it is indispensable to rely both on the government and on education. Unfortunately, both the government and education were inefficient in the past, because those who conducted them were not sufficiently sincere. As a result, the law lost its function; technical knowledge had little practical use; and even machinery did not work efficiently. Why is it that men in the same position worked differently, and that the same technique and same machinery did not bring about same results? Obviously, in order to make the law or the machine work, it does not depend so much upon the law or the machinery themselves as it does upon the personnel. The key lies in the human element. Social movement is the one way which will influence personal character to a large extent in a short time. No other method, political or educational, can be compared with it. Of course, politics and education have their roles to play. It is not our object to explain them here. In such a national crisis, if we are not willing to bind our hands waiting for death, we ought to reconstruct our society with extraordinary means instead of merely sitting down and waiting for the process of natural evolution. In other words, it is a gigantic task for the New Life Movement to wipe out the backward conditions of society by a wild storm and to supply the community with vitality and the right spirit by a gentle breeze.

IV. THE CONTENTS OF THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

A. The Principles of the New Life Movement

The New Life Movement aims at the promotion of a regular life guided by the four virtues, ("li," "i," "lien," and "ch'ih). These virtues must be applied to ordinary matter, such as food, clothing, shelter, and action. The four virtues are the essential principles for the promotion of morality. From these rules, one learns how to deal with men and matters, how to cultivate oneself, and how to adjust oneself to surroundings. Whoever violates these rules is bound to fail; and a nation which neglects them will not survive.

There are two kinds of sceptics:

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First, some hold the view that the four virtues are simply rules of good conduct. No matter how good they may be, no benefit to the nation can be derived from them if the knowledge and technique used by that nation are inferior to others.

Those who hold this view do not seem to understand the difference between matters of primary and secondary importance. From the social and national point of view, only those who are virtuous can best use their knowledge and technique for the salvation of the country. Otherwise, ability may be abused for dishonorable purposes. "Li," "i," "lien," and "ch'ih" are the principal rules alike for community, a group, or the entire nation. Those who do not observe these rules will probably utilize their knowledge and ability to the disadvantage of society. Therefore, these virtues may be considered as matters of primary importance upon which the foundation of a nation can be solidly built.

Secondly, there is another group of people who argue that these virtues are merely refined formalities, which have nothing to do with the actual necessities of daily life. For instance, of one is hungry, can these formalities feed him? This is probably due to some misunderstanding of the famous teachings of Kuam-Tze, who said: "When one does not have to worry about his food and clothing, then he cares for personal honor; when the granary is full, then people learn good manners." The sceptic fails to realize that the four virtues teach one how to be a man. If one does not know these, what is the use of having abundance of food and clothing? Moreover, Kuam-Tze did not intend to make a general statement, merely referring to a particular subject at a particular time. When he was making broad statements, he said: "'Li,' 'i,' 'lien,' and 'ch'ih' are the four pillars of the nation." When these virtues prevail, even if food and clothing are temporarily insufficient, they can be produced by man power: or, if the granary is empty, it can be filled through human effort. On the other hand, when these virtues are not observed, there will be robbery and beggary in time of need: and from a social point of view robbery and beggary can never achieve anything. Social order is based on these virtues. When there is order, then everything can be done properly: but when everything is in confusion, very little can be achieved. Today robbers are usually most numerous in the wealthiest cities of the world. This is an obvious illustration of confusion caused by non-observance of virtues. The fact that our country has traitors as well as corrupt officials shows that we, too, have neglected the cultivation of virtues, and if we are to recover, these virtues must be adopted as the principles of a new life.

B. <u>The Meaning of "Li," "I," "Lien," and "Ch'ih."</u>

Although "Li," "i," "lien," and "ch'ih" have always been regarded as the foundations of the nation, yet the changing times and circumstances may require that these principles be given a new interpretation. From the pragmatic point of view today we may interpret the four virtues as follows:

"Li" means regulated attitude, (mind as well as heart).
"I" means right conduct, (in all things).
"Lien" means clear discrimination, (honesty, in both personal, public, and official life).
"Ch'ih" means real self-consciousness, (integrity and honor).

The word "li" means reason. It becomes natural law, when applied to nature; it becomes a rule, when applied to social affairs; and signifies discipline, when used in reference to national affairs. These three phases of one's life are all regulated by reason. Therefore, "li" can be interpreted as regulated attitude of mind and heart.

The word "i" means proper. Any conduct which is in accordance with natural law, social rule, or national discipline must be considered as proper. When an act is not proper, or when one thinks it proper but does not act accordingly, the act is naturally not right and therefore cannot be called "i."

The word "lien" means clear. It denotes distinction between right and wrong. What agrees with "li" and "i" is right, and what does not so agree is wrong. To take what we recognize as right and to forego what we recognize as wrong constitute clear discrimination. This is "lien."

The word "ch'ih" means consciousness. When one is conscious of the fact that his own actions are not in accordance with "li," "i," and "lien," he feels ashamed. When he is conscious of the fact that others are wrong, he feels disgusted. But the consciousness must be real and thorough so that he will strive to improve the good and endeavor to get rid of the evil. Then we call it "ch'ih."

From the explanations given above, it is clear that "ch'ih" governs the motive of action, that "lien" gives the guidance for it, that "i" relates to an action actually being carried out, and that "li" regulates the outward form of that particular action. The four are interrelated. They are interdependent upon one another in order to make a virtue perfect. Otherwise, "li" without "i" becomes

dishonest; "li," without "lien" becomes extravagant; and "li" without "ch'ih" becomes flattering. All these may appear like "li" but really they are not. Similarly, "i" without "li" turns to be offensive; "i" without "lien," lavish; "i" without "ch'ih", fantastic. All these are really not "i." Again, "lien" without "li" is false; "lien" without "i" is niggard; and "lien" without "ch'ih" is corrupt. They are not "lien." In like manner, "ch'ih" without "li" will be chaotic; "ch'ih" without "i," violent; and "ch'ih" without "lien," ugly. They are no longer "ch'ih."

It would be a golden opportunity for traitors and sinners if the four virtues are perverted.

C. The Meaning of Food, Clothing, Shelter, and Action.

There are two necessary elements in our daily life. One refers to the material stuff for our food, clothing, shelter, and communications, and the other, the manner in which the material is used to serve our daily purposes. The first belongs to the material side; and the second may be called the manifestation of the spiritual side of human life.

The Chinese word "hsin" may be interpreted broadly or narrowly. Narrowly, it simply means walk; but broadly it means action. All kinds of human behavior in connection with daily life may be included in this word "hsin." While Dr. Sun Yat-sen referred to food, clothing, shelter, and communication in "The Three Principles of the People," he used the same word "hsin" to denote communications only (the extended sense of walk). In his "Principles of National Reconstruction," he said: "The government should cooperate with the people in developing agriculture in order to provide the people with sufficient food, in developing the textile industry in order to provide them with sufficient clothes, in building all kinds of houses in order to improve their shelter, and in constructing roads and canals in order to provide means of communication for them." He used the same word "hsin" for communications, apparently, in the narrower sense.

But in this monograph, I intend to use the same word "Hsin" both in its broad and in its narrow sense. My own "philosophy of 'hsin'" also includes both. This is also true of the previous chapters.

D. The Application of "Li," "I," "Lien," and "Ch'ih" to Food, Clothing, Shelter, and Action.

What I want to develop now is how to apply these four virtues to food, clothing, shelter and action.

The means of maintaining our livelihood may be divided into three phases: first, the obtaining of materials; second, the selection of quality; and third, the manner in which these materials are used. Let me put them separately.

1. The obtaining of materials should be governed by the principle of "lien." Clear discrimination should be exercised between what is ours and what is not. If they do not belong to us, we should not take them. In other words, the materials for our daily life should be acquired through our own labor or through other proper means. Strife should not be encouraged. A parasite is not a good example. Even giving and taking improperly should be avoided. "What really matters is the degradation of personality, but not dying in hunger." The famous saying of a Confucianist can be quoted to illustrate this point.

2. The selection of quality should be governed by the principle of "i." Do the proper thing in a particular situation. For instance, it is proper for an old man to use silk and to take meat and to have lots of leisure; but a young man should be trained to endure hardship. What is proper in winter is not necessarily proper in summer. What is proper in the north is not necessarily proper in the south. Similarly, different positions may influence a situation differently. A ruler, or any army commander, must have some authority; while those of a lower rank should not enjoy the same thing, but should respect discipline. Thus, what is proper is influenced by age, season, location, and rank; the selection of quality varies in different situations.

3. The manner in which materials are used should be governed by the principle of "li," which includes natural law, social rules, and national discipline, as explained in the former chapter.

The interrelationship of these four virtues has already been fully discussed. When applied to daily life this is even more true. All virtues should be carefully observed. If one of them is neglected, there is a black spot in our life.

V. THE PROCEDURE OF THE NEW LIFE MOVEMENT

1. Organization

1. The whole movement should be conducted by the Nanchang Association for the Promotion of the New Life Movement. If a similar movement is started in other provinces, municipalities, or districts, similar associations may be organized, but a district association should be directed by a provincial association.

2. The provincial, municipal, or district associations should be organized and directed by the highest administrative authority of that area. The local Party organization, the bureau of civil or social affairs, the bureau of education, the bureau of public safety, and the local military authorities should send a representative of high rank each to participate in the work of the association. Social groups may also send representatives.

3. Let the farmers be guided by the country officers; workers, by the managers or the responsible persons of the trade unions; merchants, by trustees of the chambers of commerce; students by their teachers; soldiers, by political secretaries or Party representatives in the army; civil servants, by their superiors; and women, by their organizations. But the local association should control all.

2. The Work of the Movement

1. Investigation
2. Planning, and
3. Execution.

3. Expenses of the Movement

Funds should be used economically. They should be collected from the organizers of the movement or from the local government. No contribution should be raised from the public.

4. Activities of the Movement

The Nanchang Association should decide general policies for the whole movement. In the beginning the movement should be confined to two campaigns: (1) good manners, and (2) cleanliness.

5. The Working Principles of the Movement

1. The movement should be started first from oneself and gradually be extended to others.

2. It should be started first with civil servants and gradually extended to the general public.

3. It should be started with simpler matters and gradually extended to others.

4. Easy and inexpensive matters should be taken up first.

5. Public organizations or public places, such as schools, offices, stations, piers, theaters, parks, etc. should be improved first.

6. The Methods of the Movement

1. Inspection follows instruction. The public should be taught with personal examples, lectures, pictures, literature, plays, and cinemas. Then the Association should send out, from time to time, agents to inspect the results of the movement and rewards should be given to those who deserve them.

2. Only superiors are allowed to interfere with the daily activities of their inferiors. Friends can only advise one another.

7 The Time of Work

Week-ends and holidays, as well as leisure hours, may be used to promote the movement. The activities of the movement should not replace the regular duties of the individual.

CONCLUSION

In short, the main object of the New Life Movement is to substitute a rational life for the irrational, and to achieve this we must observe "li," "i," "lien," and "ch'ih" in our daily activities.

1. By observing these virtues, it is hoped that rudeness and vulgarity will be got rid of, and that the life of our people will be more refined in accordance with cultural and artistic standards. By art, we are not referring to the special enjoyment of the gentry. We mean the cultural standard of all the people. It is the boundary line between civilization and barbarism. In ancient times the Chinese knew the six arts (etiquette, music, shooting, driving, writing, and mathematics). It is a pity that most of us have neglected our own arts, for, as a result, we are somewhat behind the western nations in these fields of artistic achievement. A lack of artistic training is specially revealed in the prevailing social conditions today. Suspicion, jealousy, hatred, and strife are symptoms of barbarism. To remedy these we have to emphasize art.

2. By observing these virtues it is hoped that beggary and robbery will be removed, and that officials will be honest and patriotic, that corruption will cease, and that people will pursue more productive enterprises. The poverty of our nation is primarily caused by the fact that there are too many consumers and too few producers. Consequently, many people have to live like parasites. To remedy this we have to emphasize the four virtues, and we have to make people work harder and spend less, and the officials be honest. This was the secret of success of the two ancient kingdoms Ch'i and Ch'u.

3. By observing these virtues, it is hoped that social and official disorder will be remedied, and that people will become more military minded. If a country cannot defend itself, it has every chance to lose its existence. The larger its territory, the more attractive it looks to the invaders. There is only one way for national salvation that is, to promote the economic stability of the country and develop the patriotic and fighting spirit of the people. Our territory shrinks every day in the face of foreign invasion. In order to pass through this crisis successfully, we have to pacify the interior and resist external aggression. To do this we have to rely upon force. Therefore our people must have military training. As a preliminary, we have to acquire the habits of orderliness, cleanliness, simplicity, frugality, promptness, and exactness. We have to preserve order, emphasize organization, responsibility, and discipline, and be ready to die for the country at any moment.

In conclusion, the life of our people will be more refined when we have more artistic training; we will be richer when we are more productive; and we will be much safer when we are more patriotic and better trained and equipped to defend ourselves. This rational life is founded on "li," "i," "lien," and "ch'ih." The four virtues, in turn, can be applied to food, clothing, shelter, and action. If we achieve this, we have revolutionalized the daily life of our people, and we have laid the solid foundation for our nation.

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